

Indiana Department of Correction Hosts Suicide Prevention Summit

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"Suicide is preventable and it is necessary for correctional employees to receive additional training and support to function more effectively around at-risk inmates. Corrections employees work in a tough environment and I am pleased by the high level of commitment shown by everyone attending the summit."

J. David Donahue,
Commissioner



Indianapolis, Indiana (March 1, 2006) The Department of Correction's Commissioner J. David Donahue hosted a suicide prevention summit; bringing together state and national experts to discuss best practices in suicide prevention in a correctional setting. The summit was conducted in partnership with FSSA's Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA), the National Alliance for Mentally Ill (NAMI), and the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Indiana.

Over three hundred representatives from Indiana's state operated prisons and juvenile detention facilities, county sheriff's offices across the State, other correctional officials, and representatives from the Indiana Association of Counties attended and participated in this interactive Summit, designed to share information towards reducing the incidents of suicide in correctional and treatment environments.

Commissioner J. David Donahue kicked off the summit by talking about the importance of promoting change in the corrections environment and making sure that offenders are kept engaged while incarcerated.

"Suicide is everyone's business. It's our job to create a healthy environment to promote behavioral

change in the offender population by providing opportunities. If you keep them hopping; you keep them hoping, said Donahue. "We also want to make sure that family members and visitors have information on recognizing the signs of suicide and the importance of communicating them to the right people. Suicide is in fact - preventable."

The morning session summit guest speakers included Dr. George Parker, Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction; Dr. Kathleen O'Connell, Project Director Indiana Suicide Prevention Coalition, and Dr. Frank Campbell, Executive Director of Clinical Research and Consultation, Crisis Center Foundation, Baton Rouge, LA.

The afternoon session was a workshop dedicated to how "Suicide Can Be Prevented." Facilitators from the Department included Dr. Stephen T. Hall, Religious Service Director, Rose Vaisvilas, Nursing & Contract Monitor Director, and Jerry Vance, Mental Health Director and James Friedle, PhD, Clinical Director, Correctional Medical Services.

In addition to this summit, the Department has taken other action to reduce the occurrences of suicide within prisons, including enhancing training to insure that staff is aware of how to detect and respond to warning signs. Additionally, annual staff training will have an added focusing on suicide prevention.

"Suicide is preventable and it is necessary for correctional employees to receive additional training and support to function more effectively around at-risk inmates. Corrections employees work in a tough environment and I am pleased by the high level of commitment shown by everyone attending the summit." added Donahue.

Download presentations

- "[Mental Illness in Jails & Prisons](#)" by Dr. George Parker.
- "[Suicide Prevention in Correctional Settings & Best Practices](#)" by Dr. Kathleen O'Connell
- "[Postvention Following Suicide](#)" by Dr. Frank Campbell
- [Suicide Prevention Brochure: How friends and family can help.](#)

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.